

Social Studies Lesson Reflection

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The community of Dutch Valley holds a Veteran's Day Celebration at the elementary school each year. The kids were expected to write letters to Veterans and make cards for them. When I read the letters, I noticed that many kids didn't really understand what a Veteran is. Half the time they were calling them veterinarians or vegetarians. My mentor said that this week she would be starting a lesson on communities. I thought this was a good opportunity to combine the topics and close the lesson on Veteran's as I introduced the lesson on communities.

I noticed that the kids had a technology course the Thursday prior to Veteran's day, and because there is no specific time allotted for social studies in the classroom, I asked if I could use the lab time to do the lesson. The teacher said that would be great.

I came up with a Veteran's day web search. I used the VA for Kids website. I gave the students three terms each: Veteran, "Old Glory," and VA to research on the website and give me a fact for each. I also prepared a graphic organizer for the students to use to find the meaning of symbols on the website and draw a picture of each. Next we would go to Google satellite maps and start taking a look at the spatial geography of our community.

The computer lab contained computers lined against the walls of the room, a printer and work station in the middle, and a projector with a screen on the other side of the room. I was unable to pull my documents up from my wiki, as I had intended to do, because there was a glitch with the times being different on all the computers; therefore the wiki wouldn't let me log in. I referred to my paper copy, and then opened a word document so I could type in the web addresses to show the students the website I wanted them to visit. They did so, and completed the first activity (three facts from the VA website). We were running out of time. Too many computer glitches occurred. So I decided to have the class move on to the map. We talked about what a community is, what community we are a part of, and how that tied into the Veteran's day celebration. It was difficult for me to communicate with the students. Little did I know the printer in the middle of the room was the only printer in the school. Teachers were constantly coming in and out of the room and talking to each other. I had to yell over the teachers so that the students could hear me. The students were able to get to Google maps and type in the address of the school. We turned on the satellite map and took a look at the land forms, and the differences in the surrounding communities. The students had never seen Google maps before. They started typing in their home addresses and looking at their houses from a spatial aerial view. They were amazed! We ran out of time and had to return to the classroom.

The students have asked to go to Google maps on one of the four classroom computers almost every day since then. My mentor was absent the first two days of this week, so we moved into the community's lesson. I made a vocab review on quizlet for them, we have discussed the chapter in the text book, and we went to Google maps as a class in the classroom to look at the locations the book mentions in the current chapter.

The kids really enjoy social studies. It is an interesting subject, and I am glad to see that even though social studies time is not scheduled in the school week-it is still being incorporated in this class.